

# Using the ESG

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# Quality and QA

- Quality ≠ quality assurance
- Quality ≠ standards ≠ quality standards
  - Golf analogy

## Quality

Process

**excellence**

**perfection**

**fitness for purpose**

**value for money**

**transformation**

## Standards

Outcomes

**academic**

**competence**

**service**

**organisational**

## Standards

Norms by which to judge the  
FFP of organisational  
standards

## Quality

**excellence**

**perfection**

**fitness for purpose**

**value for money**

**transformation**

**academic**

**competence**

**service**

**organisational**

			ESG

## Discussion questions

- A. The “Standards and Guidelines’ for internal and external quality assurance.
- success factors and the obstacles that you have encountered in their implementation.
  - What are the likely positive and negative consequences of their implementation?

# Discussion questions

- A. The “Standards and Guidelines’ for internal and external quality assurance.
- success factors and the obstacles that you have encountered in their **use/interpretation**.
  - What are the likely positive and negative consequences of their **use/interpretation**?

# A

## Success factors 'implementing' ESG

- ESG useful for countries starting up QA
- ESG useful for countries in transition
  - But is some of the transition because of the ESG?
  - ESG precipitate change in QA [good or bad?]
  - Some countries ahead of others (especially on internal QA) and ESG are not a main contributor to QA systems (UK, Ireland)
- ESG much more likely to be used at level 2 and 3 (external evaluation or evaluation of the agency) than level 1 (internal to the agency)
  - Clear problems engaging teachers

# A

## Obstacles in 'implementing' ESG

- Traditions are hard to change
- Resistance of academics (students, managers)
- Difficult to operate in small countries [at national/agency level S2]?
- 'Power gain' (when ESG combined with QF) [for whom?]
- Lack of connectivity between academics and institution (discipline focus required?)



# A

## Obstacles in 'implementing' ESG

- Language:
  - Terms have different connotations in different languages (when translated), e.g. guideline in German. Need to ensure translations reflect culture
  - Lack of local translations (or in case of Russia a plethora of translations)
  - Illusion of common language when English terms used: but they still have different local cultural meanings.

# A

## Positive consequences of ESG

ESG:

- provide framework for top down and bottom up
- not prescriptive (but lack of definition maybe negative)
- good basis for new start-ups
- facilitate transparency
- not difficult to implement
- support creativity [others disagree] and institutional profile
- leaves room for interpretation/flexible (but possible bad implementation)
- shows that HEIs have to develop their own QA procedures and not rely on agency
- will help to control degree mills
- aid comparability
- potential for international co-operation (e.g. small

# A But...

- Need for concrete details, best practice examples (workshops>interpretation)
- HEI agency for a for discussion
- Need for review of ESG/ 'coherent debate'
- Need to engage all stakeholders in their implementation/interpretation
- (clarify role of Bologna versus ESG?)
- Flexibility may clash with existing national context/structure

# A And...

- Countries at different levels of implementation
  - share practice and obstacles
  - quality imperialism?

# A

## Negative consequences of ESG

- May make institutions only focus on ESG and ignore the 'good' traditional QA practices.
    - “slaves to ESG” instead of “being creative”
  - oblige you to install mechanisms, but do not tell precisely how
  - Research evaluation not covered
  - Relationship between research and teaching also lacking
  - Knowledge transfer missing
  - (A loophole: students may not be included) [part of evaluation]
- Tick box mentality!

# A EQAF Forum

- Could be a forum to help communication and implementation
- Needs to communicate the outcomes back to policy makers

# A

## Peer review

- How wonderful!
- Comparisons with internal peer review as necessary motivator/aid
- External quality peer review, as Don said, is not the same: high stakes judgements
- Amateur!

## Discussion questions

- B. QA processes are associated with the following four purposes: accountability, compliance, control and improvement.
- main purpose of QA in your country and the advantages/disadvantages.
  - Do the “Standards and Guidelines” provide the basis for an approach that would improve the way quality assurance is carried out in your country and why?



# **B** Purposes of QA?

**accountability**

**information**

**control**

**compliance**

**improvement**

# B

## Main purpose of QA?

- Implicitly both accountability (transparency) and improvement (enhancement)
    - Start with improvement often results in a shift to control/accountability [politicians]
  - Compliance (with Bologna)
  - Control of the system
  - Need for international comparability and/or European perspective on QA: not sure how useful ESG in this regard
  - Benchmarking/minimum threshold standards (accreditation: minimum not excellence)
- QA as a tool for planning

# B

## Advantages and disadvantages

- ESG provide baseline for (start-up) for QA
- ESG driver for change in agencies
- And in institutions (not slavish but PIs)
- Incompatibility of an accountability and enhancement approach not resolved by the ESG
  - Solution: externally addressed accountability through internally organised enhancement:
    - [improvement is its own accountability]
- Doesn't sufficiently promote creativity: danger of compliance and stultification
- ESG used internally to claim QA is a European requirement/phenomena

# B

## ESG improve how QA is done?

### ESG

- provide a common language
- promotes discussion about procedures
- encourages risk management
- (improved governance)
- not a blueprint, room for adapting to local contexts
- apply to agencies as well
  - same language
  - joint owners of QA
- Resources flagged up but...

# Conclusions of debate

- But if ESG ultimately about improvement, how do you persuade institutions they want to improve?
- Currently, ESG tend to be used top down, externally rather than internally, and this is the wrong way round.
- 'Concept of quality assurance is sometimes perceived as old-fashioned, although in some cases it is less threatening than quality management or quality culture.'

## Conclusions of debate (2)

- Quality is a burden!
- Learning outcomes will solve all (behaviourist)
- Discipline specific?
- Creativity!
- Internal and external integration
- [Accreditation in Europe: professional accreditation in UK; Scotland fees!]
- Cultural and the 'legal'

# Quality culture

- What is it? Hard to say!
  - Pre-requisite for QA or result of QA? (Iterative?)
- Features:
  - Academic ownership
  - Recognition of need for system (but not bureaucracy)
  - Behaviour rather than the system
  - Clarity of purpose
  - Centrality of students
  - Partnership and co-operation
  - Individual and community
  - Leadership: inspires rather than dictates
  - Welcoming of external critical evaluation
  - Self reflection and initiative to improve

# Quality culture

- Quality culture: two dimensions
  - whether individual behaviour is group-controlled
  - whether individual behaviour is prescribed by external rules and regulations
- 4 'ideal-type' quality cultures in higher education



## Quality culture cont.

		Degree of group-control	
		Strong	Weak
Intensity of external rules	Strong	<i>Responsive</i>	<i>Reactive</i>
	Weak	<i>Regenerative</i>	<i>Reproductive</i>

## Making sense of quality culture cont.

- **Responsive** quality culture: led by external demands, opportunistic, combining accountability and improvement, but perhaps also sometimes a lack of ownership and control
- **Reactive** quality culture: reward or sanction led, task-oriented, doubts about the potential of improvement, compliance, reluctant ("beast to be fed")
- **Regenerative** quality culture: internally oriented with strong belief in staff and existing procedures, widespread, experimental, although not always adaptive to external demands and developments
- **Reproductive** quality culture: wanting to minimize the impact of external factors, focusing on sub-units, lack of transparency throughout the institution, emphasise the expertise of the individual



## Making sense of quality culture cont.

- **Responsive** quality culture: led by external demands, but perhaps also sometimes a lack of ownership and control  
**Cook the sausages but forget to eat them**
- **Reactive** quality culture: reward or sanction led,  
**Burn the sausages and hope someone will eat them** (e.g. "fed")
- **Regenerative** quality culture: internally oriented with strong belief in staff and existing procedures, widespread, e.g. **Make kebabs instead** (not always adaptive to external demands and developments)
- **Reproductive** quality culture: wanting to minimize the impact of external factors, focusing on sub-  
**Can't light the BBQ and get a take away as usual** institution, emphasise the expertise of the individual

